

Most of the farm families I represent live and make their living either along the Mississippi, or its many tributaries. Soil erosion is a problem for farmers by reducing long-term sustainability and income potential of their acres. It is my understanding that farmers in the Upper Mississippi River Basin lose more than \$300 million annually in applied nitrogen to soil erosion. In addition, sediment fills the main shipping channel of the Mississippi that family farmers depend on to get their commodities to markets.

Farmers live close to the land, and are committed to being good stewards. This legislation helps farmers and local conservation groups assess where problems are occurring in their watershed, and how to efficiently and effectively solve the problem.

I believe this legislation is beneficial in mending our environment along the river, and better protecting it in the future. Sediment is a threat to the Mississippi's fish, birds, and other wildlife by filling wetlands. Sediment reduces wetlands' ability to be an adequate water filter and provide habitat to the creatures that live all along the Mississippi River. It is estimated that the Upper Mississippi contributes 31 percent of the nitrogen that impairs the water quality of the Lower Mississippi basin.

Part of the Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge is in my district. I believe this refuge is an important treasure for Iowa. What makes this area special is, of course, the unique wildlife that lives there. This legislation helps promote wildlife by monitoring and computer modeling data to ensure scientifically sound and cost-effective decisions in promoting water quality.

Additionally, a healthy Mississippi River is very important to the communities of eastern Iowa. The Mississippi is recognized throughout the United States and abroad as "America's River". The Quad Cities area is a popular destination of international travelers who want to see and touch the water. For the residents of the Quad Cities area, the riverfront is the center of social life, with a historic district, baseball diamond, and several annually held festivals.

The City of Dubuque boasts over one million visitors thanks to the Mississippi. This community has chosen to make its story of the river the cornerstone of its urban renewal with a million dollar investment in the revitalization of the riverfront. The America's River project and historic Port of Dubuque represent the community's dedication to growing its tourism industry.

Madam Speaker, the Upper Mississippi's health and water quality essential to growing the economies of the larger river cities of Bettendorf, Davenport, Clinton, and Dubuque, and the picturesque river towns of Guttenberg, LeClair, Bellevue, and Marquette. All of these communities, along with farmers and conservationists, have invested much time and effort in promoting a clean river. I believe this legislation helps to insure these investments by coordinating the many interests of those living in the Upper Mississippi River Basin. Accordingly, I am a proud sponsor of this bill, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation.

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) that the House suspend the

rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5340, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RIO ARriba COUNTY LAND CONVEYANCE ACT

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill (S. 213) to direct the Secretary of the Interior to convey certain Federal land to Rio Arriba County, New Mexico.

The Clerk read as follows:

S. 213

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Rio Arriba County Land Conveyance Act".

SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.

In this Act:

(1) COUNTY.—The term "County" means the County of Rio Arriba, New Mexico.

(2) MAP.—The term "map" means the map entitled "Alcalde Proposed Land Transfer" and dated September 23, 2004.

(3) SECRETARY.—The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of the Interior.

SEC. 3. CONVEYANCE OF LAND TO RIO ARriba COUNTY, NEW MEXICO.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Subject to valid existing rights, the Secretary shall convey to the County, without consideration, all right, title, and interest of the United States in and to the land (including any improvements to the land) described in subsection (b).

(b) DESCRIPTION OF LAND.—The land referred to in subsection (a) consists of approximately 171 acres of land located on the Sebastian Martin Land Grant in the vicinity of Alcalde, Rio Arriba County, New Mexico, as depicted on the map.

(c) REVERSION.—If any portion of the land conveyed under subsection (a) ceases to be used for public purposes the land shall, at the option of the Secretary, revert to the United States.

(d) CONDITIONS ON SALES.—If the County sells any portion of the land conveyed to the County under subsection (a)—

(1) the amount of consideration for the sale shall reflect fair market value, as determined by an appraisal; and

(2) the County shall pay to the Secretary an amount equal to the gross proceeds of the sale, for use by the Director of the Bureau of Land Management in the State of New Mexico, without further appropriation.

(e) COSTS.—The County shall pay any costs associated with the conveyance of land under subsection (a).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, S. 213 would convey 171 acres of Bureau of Land Management lands located on the Sebastian Martin Land Grant to Rio Arriba Coun-

ty. The land is needed for county facilities, a cemetery for a local parish and a new public school.

Representative HEATHER WILSON, as well as the two Senators from New Mexico, are also supportive of this bill. I urge the passage of this measure.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KIND. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the champion of this legislation, my good friend from the State of New Mexico (Mr. UDALL).

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to urge the passage of S. 213, the Rio Arriba County Land Conveyance Act. S. 213 will convey to the County of Rio Arriba approximately 171 acres of Bureau of Land Management land. The county intends to use this land for a new public school, county facilities and a cemetery for the local parish.

Rio Arriba County in northern New Mexico is a vast, beautiful county with significant amounts of Federal land. The growing population of Rio Arriba has led to an increased demand for public services but no municipal lands on which to site them.

Under most circumstances, this sort of transfer would be conducted administratively under the provisions of the Recreation and Public Purposes Act and authorizing legislation would not be required. This bill is before us today only because these lands are located on the Sebastian Martin Land Grant and were acquired by the Federal Government under the Bankhead-Jones Act. The Recreation and Public Lands Act does not apply to acquired lands, but the legislation is in keeping with provisions of that act.

The Rio Arriba County Manager, Lorenzo Valdez, and members of the Rio Arriba Board of County Supervisors worked hard on this and diligently. School Board Chairman Joe Guillen and School Board members Leroy Salazar, Ralph Medina and Isaac Medina worked tirelessly to raise the money necessary to construct the new school.

Father Terry Brennan, the Pastor of San Juan Pueblo Parish, helped on this effort in order to ensure that his parish would have the land necessary for a cemetery.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. KIND. Madam Speaker, we encourage adoption of this legislation, and yield back the remainder of our time.

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, I have no additional speakers. We urge adoption and yield back the balance of our time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 213.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof)

the rules were suspended and the Senate bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

COLORADO NORTHERN FRONT RANGE MOUNTAIN BACKDROP PROTECTION STUDY ACT

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 2110) to provide for a study of options for protecting the open space characteristics of certain lands in and adjacent to the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests in Colorado, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 2110

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; FINDINGS; PURPOSE.

(a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the “Colorado Northern Front Range Mountain Backdrop Protection Study Act”.

(b) **FINDINGS.**—Congress finds the following:

(1) Rising dramatically from the Great Plains, the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains provides a scenic mountain backdrop to many communities in the Denver metropolitan area and elsewhere in Colorado. The portion of the range within and adjacent to the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests also includes a diverse array of wildlife habitats and provides many opportunities for outdoor recreation.

(2) The open space character of this mountain backdrop is an important esthetic and economic asset for adjoining communities, making them attractive locations for homes and businesses.

(3) Rapid population growth in the northern Front Range area of Colorado is increasing recreational use of the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and is also placing increased pressure for development of other lands within and adjacent to that national forest.

(4) Efforts by local governments and other entities have provided important protection for portions of this mountain backdrop, especially in the northern Denver metropolitan area. However, some portions of the mountain backdrop in this part of Colorado remain unprotected and are at risk of losing their open space qualities.

(5) It is in the national interest for the Federal Government, in collaboration with local communities, to assist in identifying options for increasing the protection of the mountain backdrop in the northern Front Range area of Colorado.

(c) **PURPOSE.**—The purpose of this Act is to identify options that may be available to assist in maintaining the open space characteristics of lands that are part of the mountain backdrop of communities in the northern section of the Front Range area of Colorado.

SEC. 2. COLORADO NORTHERN FRONT RANGE MOUNTAIN BACKDROP STUDY.

(a) **STUDY AND REPORT.**—The Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Chief of the Forest Service and in consultation with the State and local officials and agencies specified in subsection (c), shall review the lands within the study area and, not later than one year after the date of the enactment of this Act, shall report to such officials and to Congress regarding the following:

(1) The present ownership of such lands.

(2) Which undeveloped land may be at risk of development.

(3) Actions that could be taken by the United States, the State of Colorado or a political subdivision of such State, or any other parties to preserve the open and undeveloped character of such lands.

(b) **DEFINITIONS.**—For the purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:

(1) **STUDY AREA.**—The term “study area” means those lands in southern Boulder, northern Jefferson, and northern Gilpin Counties, Colorado, that are situated west of Colorado State Highway 93, south and east of Colorado State Highway 119, and north of Colorado State Highway 46, excluding lands within the city limits of the cities of Boulder or Golden, Colorado, as generally depicted on the map entitled “Northern Front Range Mountain Backdrop Study Area” dated April, 2006.

(2) **UNDEVELOPED LAND.**—The term “undeveloped land” means land that—

(A) is located within the study area;

(B) is free or primarily free of structures; and

(C) the development of which is likely to adversely affect the scenic, wildlife, or recreational value of the study area.

(c) **CONSULTATIONS.**—In implementing this Act, the Secretary shall consult with the following:

(1) The Colorado Department of Natural Resources.

(2) Colorado State Forest Service.

(3) Colorado State Conservation Board.

(4) Great Outdoors Colorado.

(5) The Boards of County Commissioners of Boulder, Jefferson, and Gilpin Counties, Colorado.

(d) **RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.**—Nothing in this Act shall be construed as authorizing the Secretary of Agriculture to take any action that would affect the use of any lands not owned by the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) and the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. KIND) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 2110 would require the Forest Service to review lands in or adjacent to the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forest and report to the Congress on the present ownership of the lands, which undeveloped lands may be risk of development, and what appropriate actions could be taken to preserve the open and undeveloped character of the lands. This study involves how best to protect the open space between the western Denver metro area and the National Forest from development.

This bill was amended in committee to address issues raised by the Forest Service, and we urge its support.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KIND. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, we too encourage adoption of this legislation. I want to commend my good friend and colleague from the State of Colorado, Mr. Mark Udall, for his leadership on this important legislation. Mr. UDALL has been a leader in the effort to protect and preserve open space in Colorado and this legislation will help advance this cause. We would encourage its adoption and thank the majority for their cooperation.

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 210, the Colorado Northern Front Range Mountain Backdrop Protection Study bill.

The bill is intended to help local communities identify ways to protect the Front Range Mountain Backdrop in the northern sections of the Denver-metro area, especially the region just west of what will soon be the Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge.

The Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest includes much of the land in this backdrop area, but there are other lands as well.

Rising dramatically from the Great Plains, the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains provides a scenic mountain backdrop to many communities in the Denver metropolitan area and elsewhere in Colorado.

The portion of the range addressed in this bill also includes a diverse array of wildlife habitats and provides many opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Its open-space character is an important esthetic and economic asset for adjoining communities, making them attractive locations for homes and businesses.

But rapid population growth in the northern Front Range area of Colorado is increasing recreational use of the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forest and is also placing increased pressure for development of other lands.

We can see this throughout Colorado and especially along the Front Range.

Homes and shopping centers are spreading up the valleys and along the highways. This development then spreads out along the ridges and mountain tops that make up the backdrop.

The result is potential loss of many of the very qualities that attract new residents.

This bill is designed to help provide a better understanding of what steps might be done to lessen that risk.

Already, local governments and other entities have provided important protection for portions of this mountain backdrop.

The bill acknowledges their good work and aims to assist further efforts along the same lines.

The bill does not interfere with the authority of local authorities regarding land use planning. And it does not infringe on private property rights.

Instead, it will bring the land protection experience of the Forest Service to the table to assist local efforts to protect areas that comprise the backdrop.

Under the bill, the Forest Service will work in collaboration with local communities, the state, nonprofit groups, and other parties.

I think this is in the national interest.

The backdrop both beckoned settlers westward and was a daunting challenge to their progress. Their first exposure to the harshness and humbling majesty of the Rocky Mountain West helped define a region, and the pioneers' independent spirit and respect for nature still lives with us to this day.

We need to work to maintain the mountain backdrop as a cultural and natural heritage for ourselves and generations to come.

This bill is intended to assist in that effort, and I urge its approval.

Mr. KIND. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of our time.

Mr. GOHMERT. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time and urge adoption.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) that the House suspend the